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ABSTRACT

The variation in requirements for graduation found in California high schools is a serious problem for migrant students and greatly diminishes their chances for high school graduation. In order to present an analysis of this variation for use by all educators concerned with the problems of migrant education and to provide the Parlier High School Portable Assisted Study Sequence (P.A.S.S.) Program with information necessary for curriculum and program planning, the graduation requirements of a sample of 46 high schools participating in P.A.S.S. were analyzed in the areas of math, science, language arts, social studies, physical education, electives, and total units required. In non-elective curriculum areas, the greatest variability of requirements was in language arts, social studies, and physical education. Math and science requirements varied only slightly. The number of required elective units ranged from 60 to 155, and the number of non-elective units ranged from 65 to 140. The total units required ranged from 200 to 240, with the majority (57%) requiring 220. The findings, generalizable to migrant education throughout California, have implications for the curriculum design of the P.A.S.S. Program and are indicative of potential difficulties facing the program's goal of helping migrant students graduate from high school. (SB)

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THE PARLIER REPORT:

California High School Graduation Requirements Affecting Migrant Students

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OCTOBER 1979

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An analysis of local high school graduation requirements of California high schools serving migrant student populations.

by Cybernetic Learning Systems

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in cooperation with the:

Parlier Unified School District
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and

The California State Department of Education-Migrant Education Section
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Special recognition is given to cooperating high school district administrators for provision of requested information. (see Appendix A)

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SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

This report is an attempt to analyze and present the variations found in graduation requirements among California High Schools serving migrant students. The problems which migrant students face in public educational settings are numerous and complex in nature. The transient life circumstances of the migrants make continuity in education nearly impossible. This lack of continuity along with other cultural and linguistic problems faced by migrants in education has resulted in an alarmingly high drop out rate among migrant secondary students.

Although the California State Migrant Education Program has made successful strides toward the amelioration of problems facing migrant students in public education, many problems remain. In order to better meet the unique educational needs of migrant students, a greater understanding of specific obstacles facing migrant students is required. The Portable Assisted Study Sequence (P.A.S.S.) Program of Parlier Unified School District has commissioned this report to study the problem of variation in graduation requirements among California high schools and the resulting problems posed for migrant students.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present descriptive information as to the graduation requirements of a sample of California high schools serving migrant students. The study reported here was undertaken with the intent that the resulting information could be of use to migrant educators in

various agencies. The P.A.S.S. Program of Parlier has requested the compilation of this report in a continued effort to study the needs of migrant secondary students which may be relevant to improving the services of the P.A.S.S. Program. The recent legislative act AB 3408, which concerns graduation requirements and minimum competency standards, has amplified the importance of understanding local high school graduation requirements for the P.A.S.S. Program. A major purpose of this report is therefore to provide P.A.S.S. with information needed to understand the nature and variety of requirements for graduation found in high schools serving migrants throughout the state.

The information in this report is not seen however, to apply solely to improving the P.A.S.S. Program. Migrant education at all levels, from state to local programs, may benefit from better understanding the critical problem area of varying graduation requirements.

Overview of the Report

This report is presented in three sections. The present section provides an introduction to the problem, a statement of purpose, and a presentation of the design of the study used to gather information for this report.

The second section of this report will be a presentation of findings. Here data will be summarized with respect to graduation requirements of high schools sampled throughout California. Requirements in the areas of language arts, math, science, social science, physical education, and electives will be presented in this section.

Finally, Section Three of this report will summarize the findings and discuss the major implications for the P.A.S.S. Program and Migrant Education in general.

Design of the Study

A sample of California high schools that serve migrant students was drawn from the list of school districts that participate in the P.A.S.S. Program of Parlier.

The sample of districts represents local agencies that serve a large number of migrant students throughout the state. All but one of the State Migrant Regions is represented by the districts in the sample.

Of the 67 school districts participating in P.A.S.S., 46 (68.7%) responded with information on graduation requirements sufficiently complete to be included in the study. (See Appendix A for a list of school districts participating.)

Participating schools were requested to send a copy of their current graduation requirements and course catalog to the P.A.S.S. office. The body of the data reported here was drawn from these documents and publications. The information is organized for the purposes of the report as follows:

Total units required for graduation.

Total non-elective units required.

Language Arts (English)

Math

Science

Social Science

Physical Education

State Requirements and other miscellaneous requirements

Total elective units required

Credit for Alternative Activities

The information will be summarized by statistical and graphic representations of central tendency, variability, and range when appropriate. The intent in presenting the data is to provide educators with concise summaries of graduation requirement trends that are extant in high schools serving migrant students. The information in some catagories does not lend itself to statistical description. General findings related to these catagories will be presented with a discussion of their implications in Sections II and III.

Applicability of Findings

As noted earlier, the intent of this report is to provide information which is useful to all educators concerned with the problems of migrant students. Although the sample of schools used to gather information for this report was restricted to those schools participating in P.A.S.S. Program, the findings are held to be generalizable to Migrant Education throughout the state. All but one migrant region is represented in this sample, and a sufficiently large enough sample was obtained to be considered a reasonable representation of schools throughout California serving migrant students.

SECTION II: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In this section the data collected from the sample high school will be presented. Graduation requirements for each curriculum area will be treated separately.

Total Units Required for Graduation

The total number of units required for graduation by the high schools sampled ranged from 200 to 240 units (grades 9-12). The average number of units required in this sample was 218. Figure 1 represents the distribution of these unit requirements.

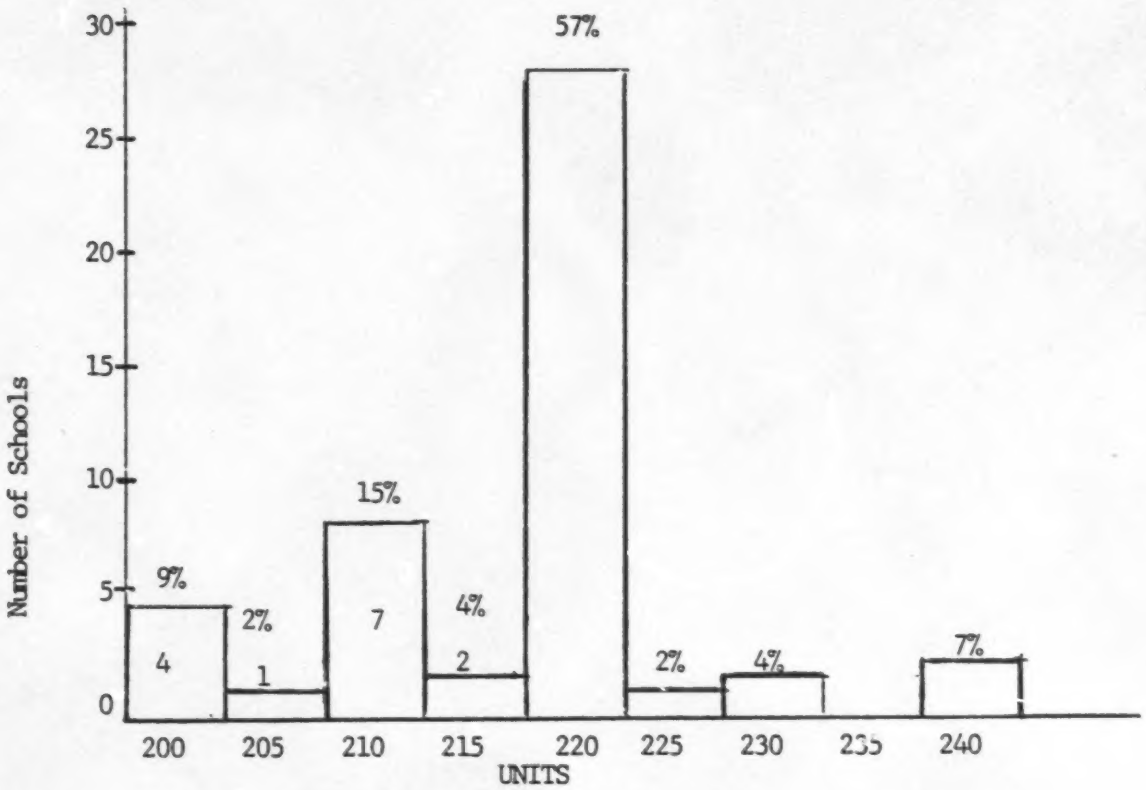

FIGURE 1. Total number of units required for graduation.

As can be noted in Figure 1, the most common requirement in total units was 220. While 57 percent of schools responding reported this common requirement, there is little consistency in the required units of the remaining 43 percent of schools. Note in Figure 1 that the variability of total units required is considerable in spite of the large number of schools reporting 220 units. The standard deviation computed for this distribution was 9.22 units.

The significance of this variability must be thought of in terms of the migrant student. It is conceivable that a migrant student moving to a new school might experience an increase in required units of as much as 40 units. If such an incident occurs during a student's senior year, it could have a serious effect on the student's chances of graduation.

When the variability of total units required is considered among all public high schools in the state, the problem appears even more serious. Figure 2 represents a comparison of the present sample data with the median and range of required units in all state districts as reported by the California State Department of Education in 1978.

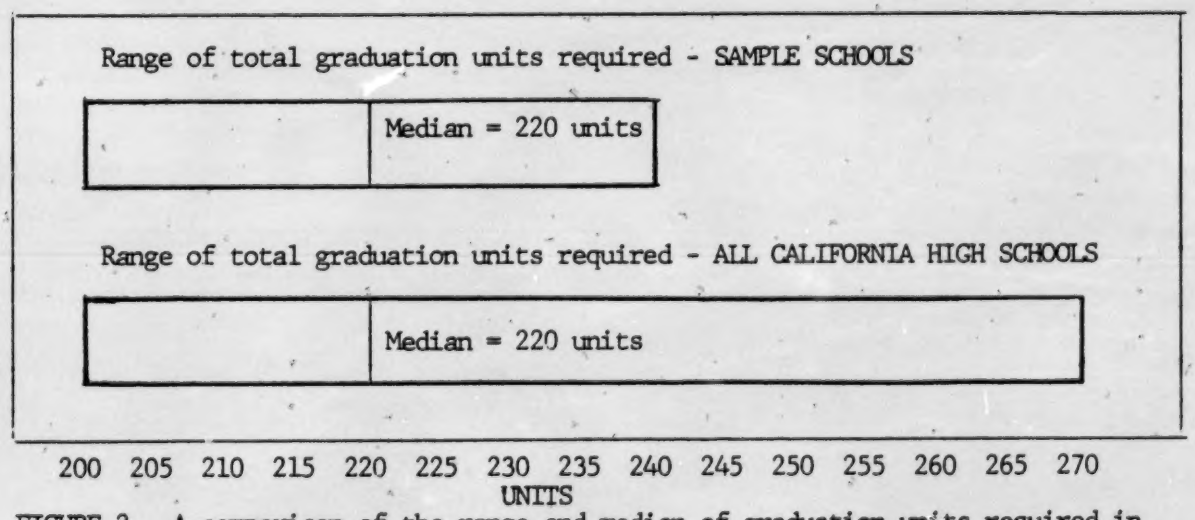
Range of total graduation units required - SAMPLE SCHOOLS
Median = 220 units
Range of total graduation units required - ALL CALIFORNIA HIGH SCHOOLS
Median = 220 units
200 205 210 215 220 225 230 235 240 245 250 255 260 265 270
UNITS

FIGURE 2. A comparison of the range and median of graduation units required in the sample high schools and all California high schools.

As seen in Figure 2, the median number of units in the present sample is identical to that found in all California high schools. However, note that while the range of the present sample only extends to a maximum of 240 units, the maximum range in the state extends to 270 units. This means throughout the state as a whole, a student may encounter a difference in required units as great as 70 units.

Several schools in the present sample reported graduation requirement increases for graduating classes 1981 through 1983. None of the sample schools reported plans to decrease unit requirements. Ten schools submitted information on planned increases which was sufficiently complete to be presented statistically. Figure 3 represents a comparison of the number of requirements the reporting schools currently require (solid line) and the number of requirements the schools plan to require in 1983 (broken line).

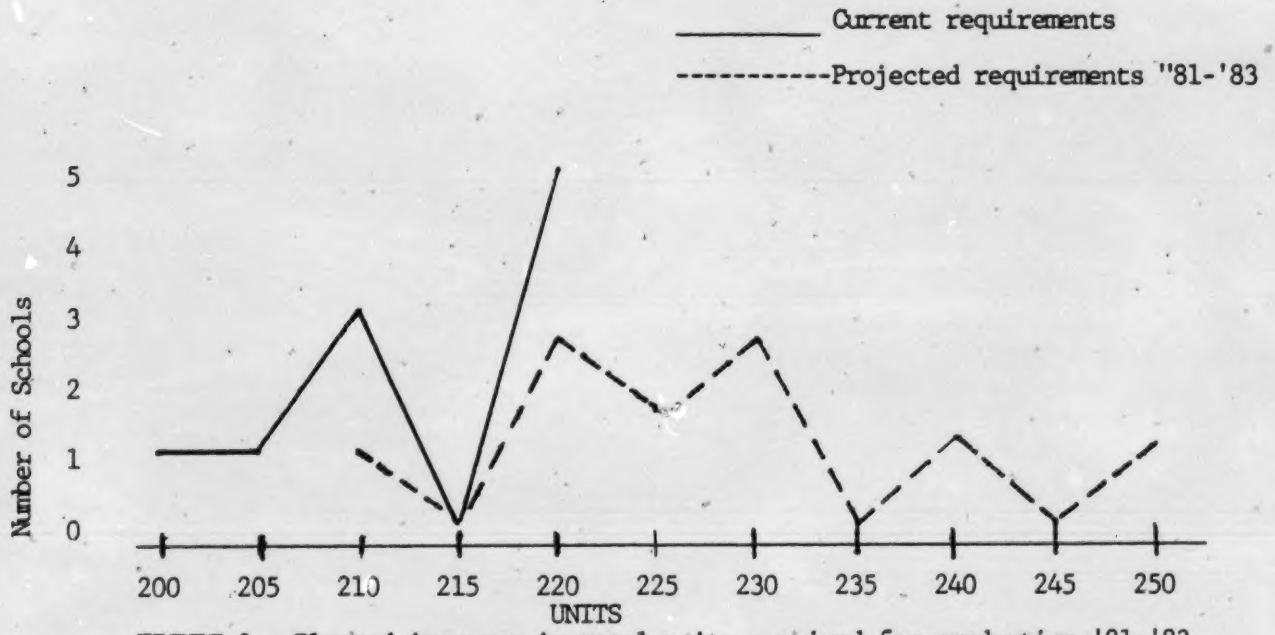

FIGURE 3. Planned increase in total units required for graduation '81-'83

The average reported increase in required units displayed in Figure 3 was 14 units per school with a minimum increase of five units and a maximum increase of 30 units.

The graduation requirement increases were almost exclusively in the areas of English, math, and social science. However, in some schools, the increases in these areas were offset by decreases in physical education requirements. Some of the schools also reported a policy of increased basic skills requirements in the event of a student's failure of the minimum competency testing mandated by AB 3408. Most schools however did not report an explicit policy regarding failure of competency tests. These contingent requirements were not considered in the data presented in Figure 3.

Total Non-elective Units Required for Graduation

Non-elective graduation requirements were reported in the catagories of Language Arts (English), Math, Science, Social Science, Physical Education, and State Requirements - Miscellaneous Requirements. The total number of non-elective required for graduation from the sample schools ranged from 65 to 140. Figure 4 represents the distribution of total non-elective units required.

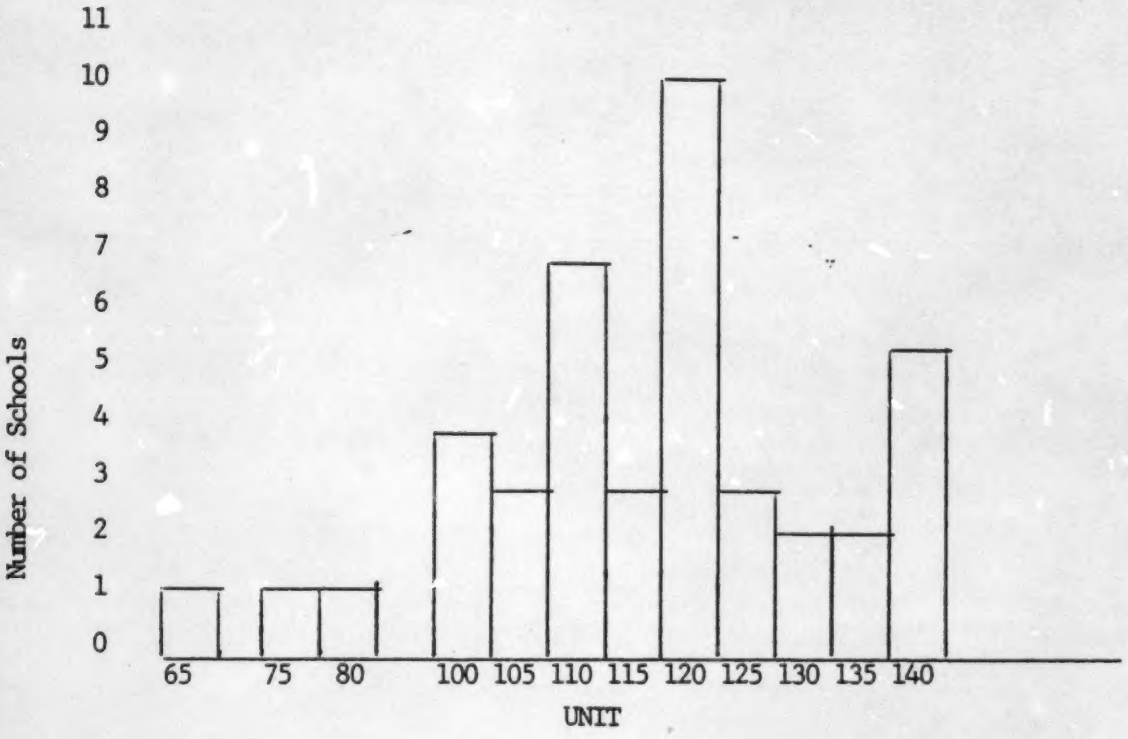

FIGURE 4. Number of non-elective units required for graduation.

The average number of non-elective requirements was 116. This represents 53.2 percent of the total 218 units required by the average sample school. As seen in Figure 4, the most common number of non-elective units required was 120 with only 25 percent of the sample schools in that catagory; the other 75 percent of the schools are widely dispersed throughout the range.

The data reported in the specific categories of non-elective requirements are presented in the sections to follow.

Language Arts (English) Requirements

The total Language Arts units required by the high schools sampled ranged from 20 to 40. Figure 5 represents the distribution of this range.

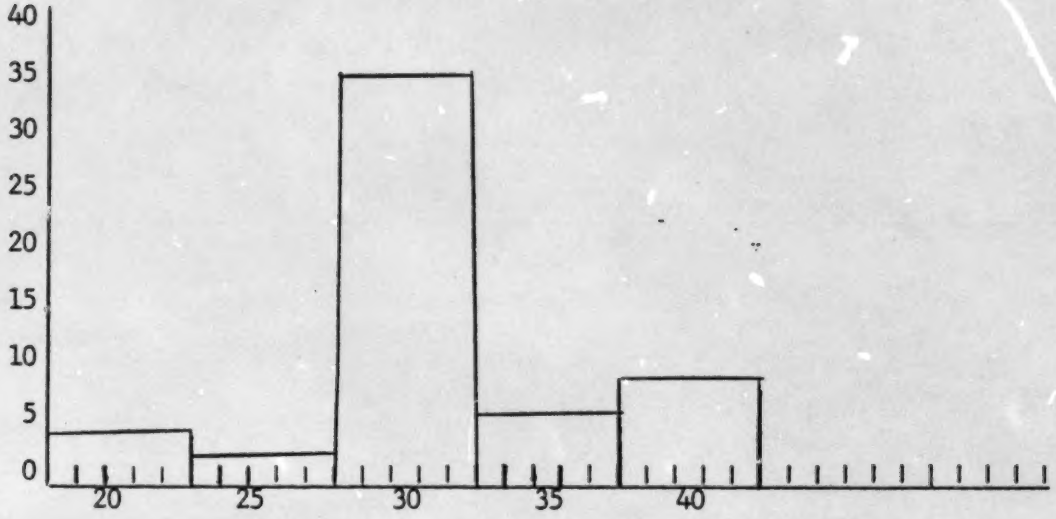

FIGURE 5. Number of Language Arts units required for graduation.

The average number of English units required by the sample schools was 31. Figure 5 indicates that the majority of schools (72 percent) require 30 Language Arts credits to graduate. The remaining 28 percent of the schools vary in their English graduation requirements. The standard deviation of the required units in this distribution is 4.16 units.

Migrant students maybe faced with a unique range of Language Arts courses, many of which are described in the course catalogs as remedial English, remedial reading, or ESL classes. Reporting schools did not state policies regarding the granting of graduation credit for ESL or remedial Language Arts classes. Policies concerning credit for repeating remedial or ESL classes was also not clearly defined. District variation in such policies would certainly exacerbate the problems migrant students face with respect to differing language requirements among schools.

Math Requirements

Math units required for graduation in the sample schools ranged from 5 to 30 units. Figure 6 depicts the distribution of the math requirements.

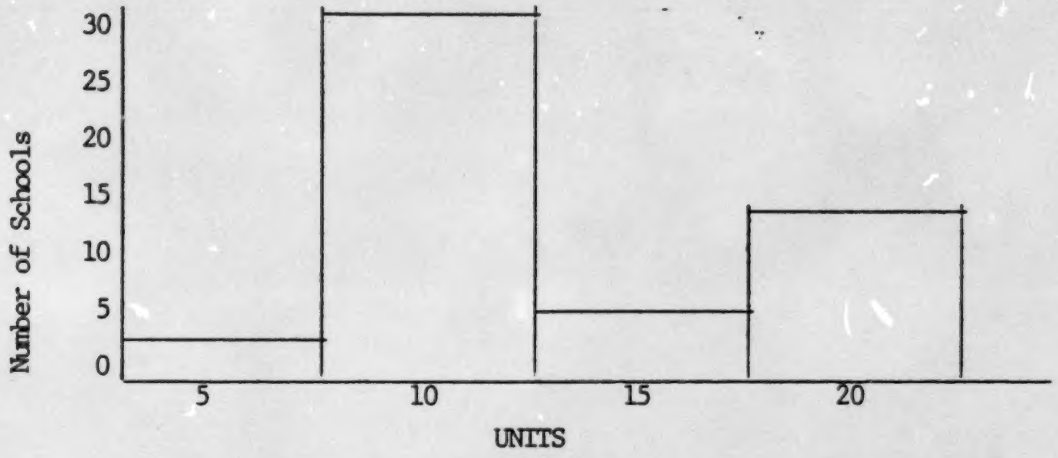

FIGURE 6. Number of Math Units Required for Graduation

The sample schools had an average math requirement of 12.5 units. Figure 6 shows the most common requirement to be 10 units and at the same time depicts a considerable variability of requirements. While the majority of schools (65 percent) require 10 units, the remaining 35 percent differ in their requirements. The standard deviation of required units in this distribution is 4.56 units. Again, the significance of this variability should be looked at in light of the potential obsticles it may pose for the migrant student. The prospect of having to make-up 15 units of math in one to two years or less because of variation in district requirements, may deter many migrant students from high school graduation.

Science Requirements

The science graduation requirement of the schools sampled varied from 10 to 20. The distribution of required units is represented in Figure 7.

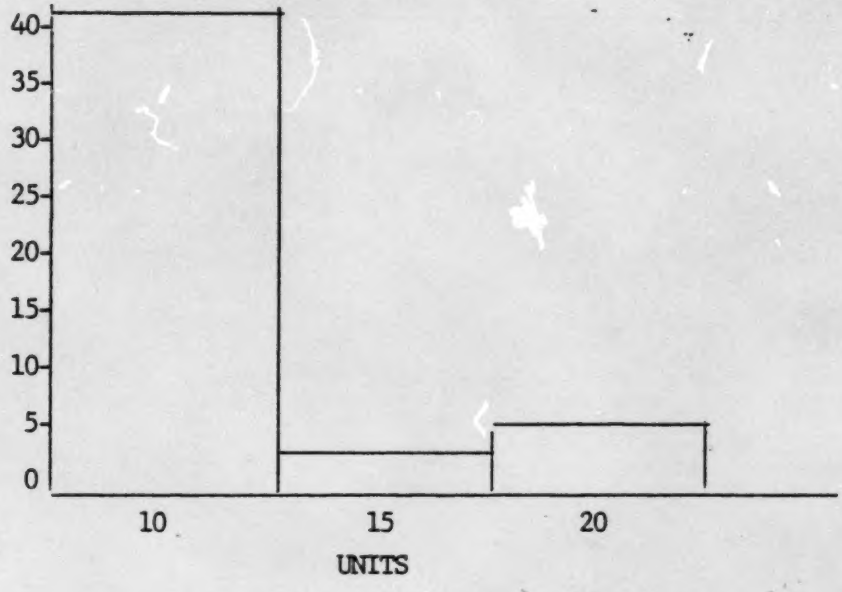

FIGURE 7. Number of Science Units Required for Graduation

The average number of units required from the sample was 11, and as seen in Figure 7, the most common requirement was 10 units. Also depicted in Figure 7 is the relatively small percentage of schools (16 percent) that maintain science requirements higher than 10 units. It should be noted, however, that several schools reported plans for doubling their science requirements to 20 units before 1983. The standard deviation for the current science requirements pictured in Figure 7 is 2.97. This appears to be the curriculum area in which graduation requirements are most consistant. Thus, the science requirements of schools throughout California may not pose a serious threat to the progress of the migrant student toward graduation.

Social Science Requirements

Social Science requirements in the sample schools ranged from 20 to 40 units with an average of 30 units. Figure 8 represents the distribution of the required units.

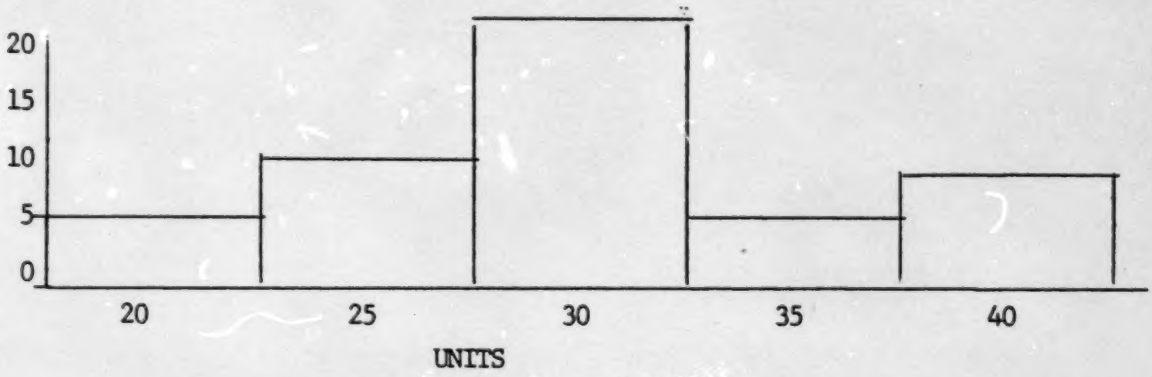

FIGURE 8. Number of Social Science Units Required for Graduation

As seen in Figure 8, 30 units is also the most common requirement with 41 percent of the schools falling in this category. Figure 8 also indicates a considerable variability of requirements, suggesting that there is no consistent agreement as to Social Science required units among the majority (59 percent) of the schools sampled.

It should also be noted here that the Social Science curricula of the present sample contained the most classes restricted to specific grade levels. It is not uncommon to find, for example, that an American Government course required in the 12th grade of one district is required in the 11th grade of another. Generally, no policies were reported concerning the interchangability of these credits when transfering into the district. The transfer and makeup of grade specific Social Science credits may be another possible area creating

obstacles for the migrant student.

Physical Education Requirements

Physical education requirements in the sample schools ranged from 20 to 40 units with an average of 26 units. The distribution of the required units is displayed in Figure 9.

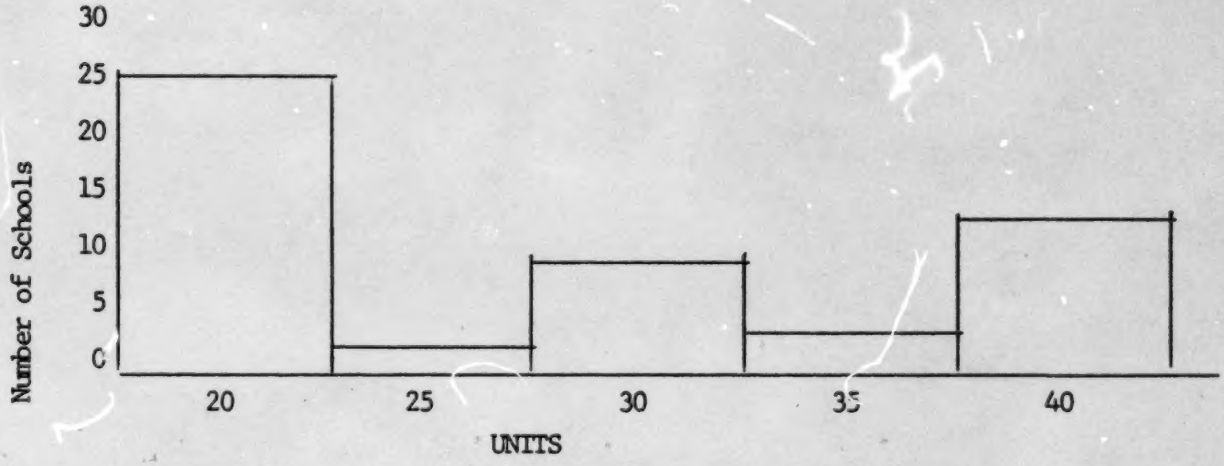

FIGURE 9. Number of Physical Education Units Required for Graduation

Figure 9 indicates that the most common unit requirement is 20. It is also evident from Figure 9 that the majority of schools (58 percent) have a 20 unit requirement while the remaining 42 percent vary from 25 to 40 units. The standard deviation in this distribution is 8.29 units. Once again, from looking at the number of schools requiring 20 units and the number of schools requiring 30 to 40 units, it is evident that migrant students can face serious deficiencies in graduation units simply by moving into a district with higher unit requirements.

State and Local Miscellaneous Requirements

The remainder of non-elective graduation requirements is composed of the state requirements and those other requirements that school districts have designed into local curricula. The average number of requirements in this catagory is 8.3 units in the sample schools. This is an average of 4.5 percent of the total number of units required for graduation.

The sample schools reported a variety of classes that are required locally. Table 1 presents a representative list of these classes and the units typically required in that area.

Course Name	Credits Required
Youth Law	5
Home Economics	5
Conservation	5
Career Guidance	5
Creative Arts	5
Foreign Language	20

TABLE 1. A List of Typical Local School District Requirements and Units Required in the Subject

Total Elective Units Required for Graduation

The total number of elective units required for graduation from the sample high schools ranged from 60 to 120. Figure 10 represents the range and distribution of elective units required.

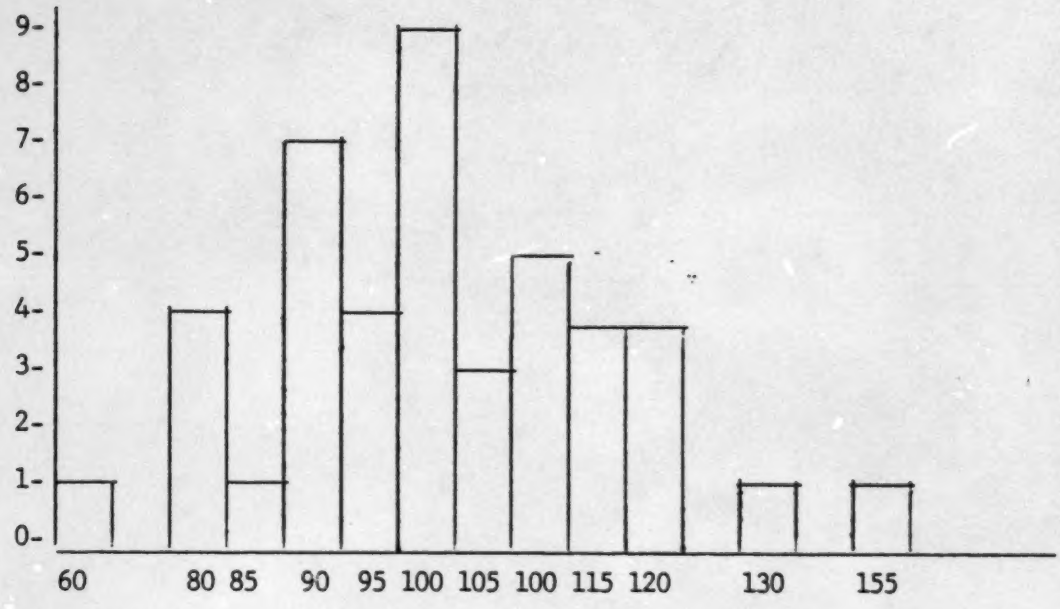

FIGURE 10. Number of Elective Units Required for Graduation

The average number of elective units required was 102. This represents 46.7 percent of the total 218 units required for graduation by the average sample high school. As seen in Figure 10, the most common number of elective units required was 100 with only 20 percent of the sample schools in that category; the other 80 percent of the schools are widely dispersed throughout the range.

Policy on Granting Credit for Alternative Activities

Of the 46 sample schools, 41 submitted information concerning policies on granting credit for alternative activities. Overall, a wide variety of programs was found in the present sample. The individual school however typically specified a somewhat narrow selection of alternative activities for which credit towards graduation would be granted.

Table 2 presents a compilation of common alternative activities for which the sample high schools grant credit.

Activity	Number of schools offering the activity
Work Experience	28
Library/Office work	25
Teacher Aide	22
Tutoring	9
Student Gov't (Leadership)	7
College Credit	6
Independent Study	6
Lab Assistant	5
Cafeteria Aide	4
Military Science	2
Parenting (Child Care Ass't.)	2
Coorespondence Courses	1

* Table 2. Alternative Programs That Yield Credit In the Sample High Schools

* The data for Table 2 comes from the course cataloges submitted by the sample schools. Any alternative programs offered but not cited in the course cataloges will not appear in Table 2.

SECTION III: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The final section of this report will be devoted to summarizing the major findings presented in the previous section. The summary of findings will include an attempt to apply the information to the problems of Migrant Education and draw conclusions where appropriate.

It should be reiterated here that the data reported in this study has limitations. While there is no reason to believe that the sample used is not a fair representation of California high schools serving migrant students, the information obtained from these schools varies in its completeness. The data presented in this report was obtained directly from official school course catalogs. If requirements and policies within a school district are more flexible or variant than those listed in the course catalogs, such information is not contained in the present analysis. Conclusions in this study are drawn solely from the data made available by the individual school districts.

With respect to this point, it should be noted that from the information supplied by local school districts, it was not possible to discern policies on such issues as graduation credit for repeated remedial coursework. This is an especially important issue for the migrant student who may be placed in remedial language programs until a level of English proficiency is gained. It has been equally unclear whether districts accept ESL coursework in the place of other English requirements. Again, data available for the present study was insufficient to address the consistency of such policy in the sample. The importance of such issues however, remains central to understanding and responding to the problems of the migrant student.

Summary of Major Findings

The most significant findings which have emerged from the data presented in the previous section are summarized in the following points.

1. The total units required for graduation in the present sample had a range of 40 units (200-240 units). A majority of schools require 220 units for graduation, however, 43 percent of the sample had requirements other than 220 units. (See Figure 1, page 5)

2. The total number of units required for graduation in all California public schools had a range of 70 units (200-270). (See Figure 2, page 6)

3. The number of non-elective units required in the present sample ranged from 65 to 140 units. The most common number of non-electives required was 120, however less than 25 percent of the schools reported having this requirement. (See Figure 4, page 9)

4. Of the non-elective curriculum areas, language, social science and physical education appear to have the greatest variability of unit requirements. (See Figure 11 for a comparison of the non-elective unit requirements) Note in Figure 11 that science and math have a relatively small range.

5. The number of elective units required by schools in the present sample ranged from 60 to 155 units. The most common requirement for elective units was 100 units, however only 20 percent of the schools reported this figure (See Figure 10, page 16).

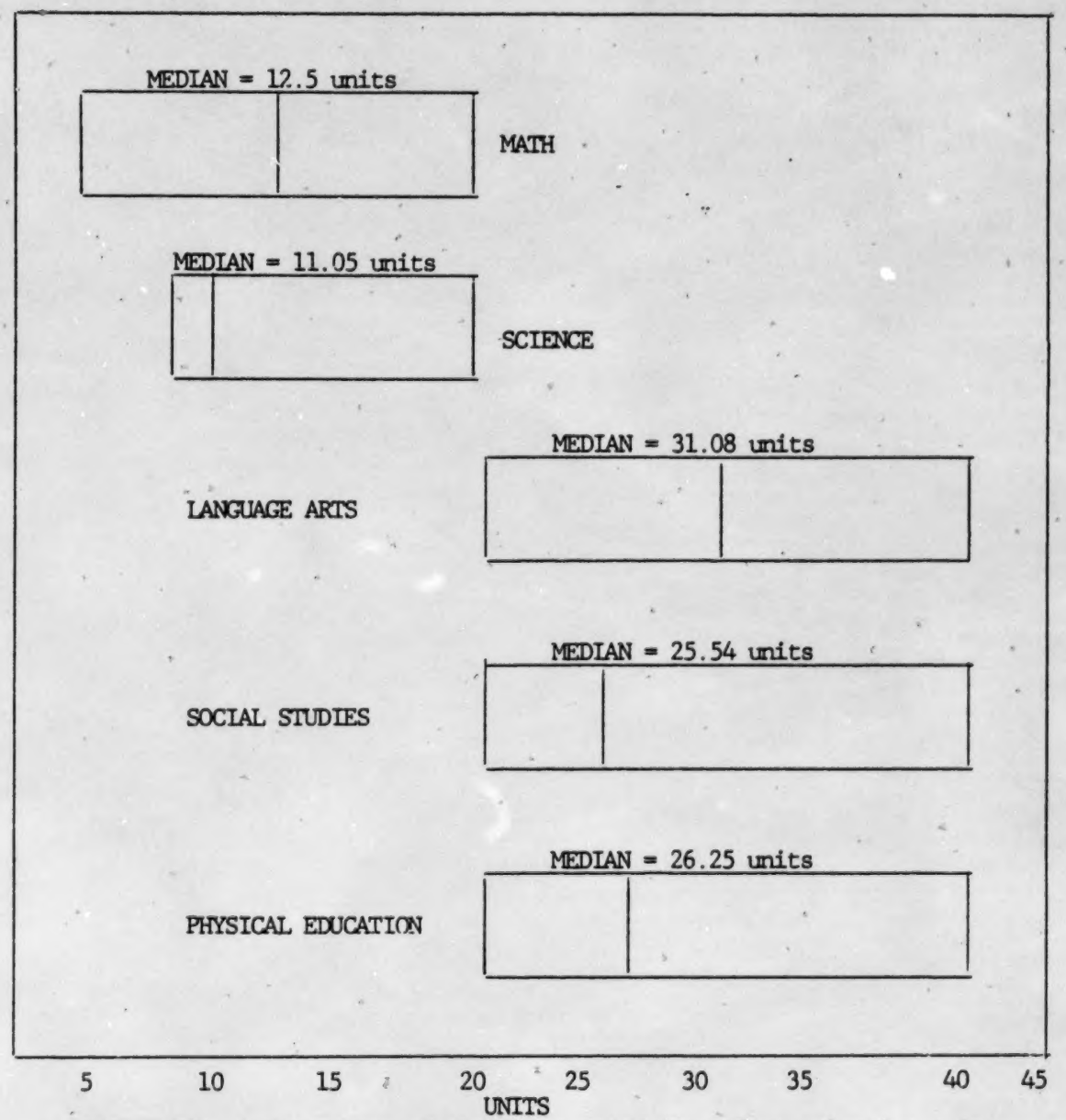

FIGURE 11. A Comparison of the Range and Median of non-elective units required for graduation in the sample high schools.

Conclusions

The data presented in this report suggest that the variability observed in graduation requirements among California high schools poses a serious problem to the migrant student population. The migrant student already faces a multitude of obstacles inherent in frequent moving between school districts. There are problems in adjusting to different teachers, varying course content and varying course sequence. In addition, credits may be lost for work only partially completed in a school prior to moving. When these problems are further confounded by varying graduation requirements among schools, the prospects for the migrant student graduation in four years are greatly diminished.

It should be noted here that it is not just the migrant student who is adversely affected by differing requirements among schools. Any student who transfers between schools during his or her education experiences similar problems. For migrant students though, movement between school districts is a frequent process. Thus the problems created by the lack of consistency in graduation requirements are paramount in Migrant Education.

As noted earlier, the meaning of the variability found in graduation requirements within the present sample is depicted best by its practical effect on the individual student. Consider the migrant student who transfers to a new school in his or her senior year of high school. According to the findings of this report, a student could expect to encounter on the average a variability of about 10 units in graduation requirements (a standard deviation of 9.22 units was reported). However, given the range of required

units reported, it would not be unlikely that a student might encounter a difference of as much as 30 to 40 required units in transferring to a new school. This could seriously disrupt the possibility of graduating on time.

It is not only the variation in total required units that may create obstacles to graduation. Variability in requirements for language arts, social science, and even physical education may also delay or discourage graduation. Even if total units required for graduation are identical in two school districts, large differences in required courses might similarly delay a student graduation. Thus, variability of all aspects of local graduation requirements presents a serious obstacle to the migrant student.

Based on the conclusions presented here, it is recommended that those involved in Migrant Education on all levels, from local agencies to the State Migrant Program, become aware of the problems created by variations in graduation requirements. Moreover, vigilance in finding or creating ways to avert these problems is needed among migrant educators. The need for such awareness and action is underscored by the impending competency requirements for high school graduation. Now migrant students will not only be faced with meeting varying unit requirements, but also with meeting the demands of differing district competency standards. The problems identified here are challenges which Migrant Education must address immediately.

Implications from the findings reported here may also be drawn with respect to the P.A.S.S. Program. The data contained in this report are applicable to the P.A.S.S. Program in two ways. First, the variability of

graduation requirements reported here identifies a potential hurdle for the P.A.S.S. Program in achieving its goal of helping migrant students graduate. The findings of this report suggest that the P.A.S.S. Program must pay special attention to the appropriateness of its curriculum to matching the variety of requirements found in local high schools. If P.A.S.S. is to achieve its goal, it must provide coursework which fills the needs of the transferring migrant students who discover deficiencies in total units and in specific requirement areas. In this light, it should be of importance to the P.A.S.S. Program that Language, Social Sciences, and Physical Education are the three curriculum areas which appeared to have the greatest variability among districts. Thus, P.A.S.S. should be prepared to meet the needs of migrants desiring to make up units in these areas.

The second implication which these findings hold for the P.A.S.S. Program concerns the importance of the role P.A.S.S. can play in Migrant Education. The problem of the variability of graduation requirements in high schools is clearly identified in this report. Correspondingly, alternatives to help migrant students compensate for the disruption caused by this variability have been found to be limited. As noted in Table 2 (page), certain school districts are offering alternative means for students to gain credit, but these programs appear limited in scope in any single school district. The P.A.S.S. Program appears to offer an extensive catalog of courses which migrant students in any district may utilize and gain credits in areas of need. Thus the findings of this study serve to emphasize the role which the P.A.S.S. Program can play in helping the migrant overcome the unique difficulties experienced by this student population.

The problems identified in this study also bring to light another feature of the P.A.S.S. students of other district through the Parlier Unified School District. While it may be preferable in most cases to graduate migrant students from their local school districts, in certain circumstances this option may be a valuable alternative to the migrant student. In the case where a migrant student encounters district graduation requirements differing markedly from his or her previous school's requirements, the option of a Parlier graduation would be worth investigating. The findings of this study emphasize the need for such options to be open to the migrant student.

In conclusion, this report has attempted to report findings concerning graduation requirements affecting migrant students and discuss the implications. It is clear from what has been found that the variability in graduation requirements is a serious problem in Migrant Education and is becoming increasingly complex with the ensuing state competency requirements. While no clearcut answers or solutions have been offered here, it is hoped that the information contained in this report will be of assistance to migrant educators in their efforts to understand and solve the problems at hand.

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS IN THE P.A.S.S. PROGRAM

	PRINCIPAL	HIGH SCHOOL
1.	Donald W. Zimkowski	Caruthers High School
2.	Neal Olsen	Shafter High School
3.	Kenneth L. Proctor	Wasco High School
4.	Dean Bettker	Franklin Senior High School
5.	Richard Darmanian	Edison High School
6.	Charles J. Nelson	Gridley High School
7.	L. Wesley Martin	Las Plumas High School
8.	John R. Johnson	Oroville High School
9.	James W. Quast	Prospect High School
10.	William Mulholland	Chico Senior High School
11.	Principal	Willows High School
12.	Lyman Saltzen	Williams High School
13.	James Been	Colusa High School
14.	James Conley	Lindhurst High School
15.	William Caldwell	Healdsburg High School
16.	Harold J. Lippstreu	Clear Lake High School
17.	James S. Bailey	Kelseyville High School
18.	J. William Tully	Ukiah High School
19.	Harold Grav	Sonoma Valley High School
20.	Walter Hampe	St. Helena Senior High School
21.	Charles Passantino	Peterson High School
22.	Emil R. Buchser, Jr.	Wilcox High School
23.	Rich Imler	Gilroy High School
24.	Douglas Hitchen	Arroyo Grande High School
25.	Henry M. Padden	Santa Maria High School

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS IN THE P.A.S.S. PROGRAM

	PRINCIPAL	HIGH SCHOOL
26.	Kenneth Casanega	San Benito High School
27.	Martin Koobation	Carpinteria High School
28.	Eugene E. Snyder William H. Jackson	Santa Barbara Senior High School Santa Barbara Senior High School
29.	A. W. McConnell	Buena Senior High School
30.	Eugene G. Dorn	Oxnard High School
31.	William J. Putman	Fillmore Senior High School
32.	Dean Reece	Righetti High School
33.	James W. Watkins	Orland High School
34.	William Baker	Tulelake High School
35.	Allan Dale Lacky	Woodland Senior High School
36.	Wayne Gadberry	Sutter High School
37.	George Zerkovich	Yuba City High School
38.	Lowell Yeager	Analy High School
39.	Glen Edmiston	Live Oak High School
40.	Al Kirney	Marysville High School
41.	Principal	Pierce High School
42.	Richard Willis	Calistoga High School
43.	Jack Gerboth	El Molino High School
44.	Edward Cereghino	Rio Vista High School
45.	Kenneth Sutton	Armijo High School
46.	Howard Brover	Green Valley High School
47.	Frank Humpert	Napa High School
48.	Robert Mansfield	Davis Senior High School
49.	Paul Broughton	Winters High School
50.	Philip N. Miller	Dixon High School

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS IN THE P.A.S.S. PROGRAM

	PRINCIPAL	HIGH SCHOOL
51.	Leroy Carney	Tokay High School
52.	Robert Warner	Madera High School
53.	Gilbert Grover	Merced High School, North
54.	C. J. Groves	Atwater High School
55.	Larry Stone	Selma High School
56.	Collins T. Haan	Stagg Senior High School
57.	Bev E. Frye	Tracy High School
58.	Joseph Spino	Roosevelt High School
59.	Helen Winzler	Dewolf Continuation High School
60.	Bryon Gavrilis	Lindsay Senior High School
61.	Albert Webb	Corcoran High School
62.	Jack O. Schulze	Arvin High School
63.	Robert Selent	Delano High School
64.	Edward F. VanDam	Brawley High School
65.	Mercedes Garcia	Calexico High School
66.	Eugene Tuback	Central High School
67.	Gerald O. Beaman	Holtville High School